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**RNASA Foundation Honors Dr. Charles Elachi, Bill Nye, and Stellar Winners**

**HOUSTON, Texas (May 3, 2016**). The Rotary National Award for Space Achievement (RNASA)Foundation presented the 2016 National Space Trophy (NST) to **Dr. Charles Elachi**, Director of NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory at the RNASA 30th annual black-tie Space Awards Gala on **April 29, 2016** at the Houston Hyatt Regency.

After the ceremonies opened with “The Soul of the Explorer”, a short film by Space City Films, **RNASA Foundation Chairman Rodolfo González** welcomed the guests to gala, saying that **“**RNASA’s mission is to encourage, recognize, honor and celebrate U.S. space achievements from across the entire country and across all sectors.”

The Clear Lake High School **Clear Lake High School JROTC Color Guard** presented the colors, followed by **Reagan Johnson**, who sang the National Anthem. [**Reverend**](http://www.clpc.org/content.cfm?id=149&member_id=19) **William H. King, III**, Greater New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, gave the invocation. Rodolfo Gonzalez recognized the former NST winners in attendance: Col. Robert Cabana, Gen. Charles Bolden, Capt. Michael Coats, Bill Gerstenmaier, Dr. Michael Griffin, Col. Eileen Collins, Dr. Glynn Lunney, Tommy Holloway, and Lt. Gen. Thomas Stafford. U.S. congressman John Culberson, representing the Texas 7th district was also in attendance and recognized.

After dinner, the program kicked off with a year-in-review film by **Space City Films**. **Miles O’Brien**, former CNN correspondent and current science correspondent for PBSNewsHour served as the emcee.

American political satirist and author, **P.J. O’Rourke** had the crowd laughing as the evenings’ featured speaker.

**Elliot Pulham**, Space Foundation CEO presented the 2016 Space Communicator Award to **Bill Nye**, CEO of the Planetary Society and best known for his role as Bill Nye the Science Guy.

The Stellar Award winners were announced by NASA Astronaut **[Rex](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonel_%28United_States%29%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank%22%20%5Co%20%22http%3A//en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonel_%28United_States%29) Walheim,** [STS-110,](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/STS-129%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank%22%20%5Co%20%22http%3A//en.wikipedia.org/wiki/STS-129) STS-122 and STS-135 and NASA Astronaut **Stephanie Wilson,** STS-121, STS-120 and STS-131 who then presented them with engraved marble trophies donated by **Orbital ATK**. The Stellar Awards were presented in Early Career, Mid-Career, Late Career, and Team categories.

**Charles Bolden**, NASA Administrator and recipient of the 2014 National Space Trophy, presented the prestigious 2016 National Space Trophy to **Dr. Charles Elachi**. NASA Astronaut Tim Kopra sent a message down from the International Space Station praising the work of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory and congratulating Dr. Elachi on receiving the National Space Trophy. To further commemorate the 30th annual event, the giant 500-pound National Space Trophy housed at Space Center Houston was also on display on center stage.

Lt. Gen **Thomas P. Stafford,** USAF (Ret.), Gemini and Apollo astronaut, and the 1993 National Space Trophy winner, presented an **OMEGA** watch to Elachi.

**TASC** donated the portrait of Elachi by **Pat Rawlings,** which was on display at the gala and used as the cover of the souvenir program. The portrait will become part of the National Space Trophy display at Space Center Houston for one year.

RNASA Chairman Rodolfo González concluded the evening by thanking the Foundation’s corporate sponsors whose support and achievements made the event possible: a.i.solutions, Inc.,

Aerojet Rocketdyne, The Aerospace Corp , ARES Corporation, ASRC Federal, Barrios Technology, Bastion Technologies, Inc., The Boeing Company, Booz Allen Hamilton, CACI International, Caltech/JPL, Cimarron, DB Consulting Group, Inc., ERC, Inc., GeoControl System, Inc., Honeywell, Jacobs, Lockheed Martin, MEI Technologies, Inc., MORI Associates, Inc., MRI Technologies , Oceaneering International, Inc., Orbital ATK, Raytheon, SAIC, SGT, Inc., Sierra Nevada Corporation, Space Foundation, SpaceX, TASC, University of Houston-Clear Lake, UTC Aerospace Systems, and Wyle.

Visit <http://www.rnasa.org/photos.html> for images from the event.

The RNASA Space Awards black tie Gala on April 29, 2016, was recorded live, in its entirety, by Space City Films and will air on NASA TV on Tuesday, May 3rd, and Wednesday, May 4th at noon and 7 pm CDT. NASA TV is carried by DirecTV, Dish Network, TVRO, several cable providers, and http://www.nasa.gov/multimedia/nasatv/ustream/.

*About the RNASA Foundation: The Rotary National Award for Space Achievement (RNASA) Foundation was founded by the Space Center Rotary Club of Houston, Texas in 1985 to organize and coordinate an annual event to recognize outstanding achievements in space and create greater public awareness of the benefits of space exploration. The nonprofit Foundation presents the National Space Trophy and Stellar Awards each year. See*[*http://www.rnasa.org*](http://www.rnasa.org) *for more information.*

Caption for photos:

**Elliot Pulham, CEO of the Space Foundation presents the Space Communicator Award to Bill Nye (NASA photo, 2016)**

**NASA Administrator Gen. Charles Bolden presents the National Space Trophy to JPL Center Director, Dr. Charles Elachi (NASA photo, 2016)**

**Lt. Gen. Thomas Stafford presents the OMEGA speedmaster watch to Dr. Charles Elachi (NASA photo, 2016)**